United Nations A/C.3/73/SR.10

General Assembly
Seventy-third session

Official Records

Distr.: General
2 November 2018

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 10th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 8 October 2018, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Saikal ..... (Afghanistan)

Contents

Organization of work

Agenda item 29: Advancement of women (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be sent as soon as possible, under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, to the Chief of the Documents Management Section (srms@un.org), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org/).

18-16684 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Organization of work

1. **The Chair** informed the Committee that, at the previous meeting, a vote had been requested on the proposal put forward by the delegation of Burundi to seek a legal opinion regarding the legal basis for the inclusion of the Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi in the Committee's list of special procedure mandate holders authorized to report to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session; and the legal basis for the Commission's dialogue with the Committee in view of paragraph 22 of Human Rights Council resolution 39/14 of 28 September 2018.

2. **Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi), speaking on a point of order, requested that the proceedings be suspended to allow for further consultations.

3. *The meeting was suspended at 3.10 p.m. and resumed at 3.20 p.m.*

4. **Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi), speaking on a point of order, clarified that he had not requested the suspension of the meeting but rather the adjournment of the debate under rule 116 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

5. **The Chair** said that, in accordance with rule 116, a recorded vote would be taken on the motion proposed by the representative of Burundi to adjourn the debate on the proposal of Burundi to seek a legal opinion.

6. **Ms. Mountchou** (Morocco) and **Mr. Aldahhak** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that their delegations supported the motion proposed by Burundi.

7. **Mr. Mahidi** (Austria) and **Ms. Korac** (United States of America), speaking on a point of order, asked what an adjournment in accordance with rule 116 would entail and when the Committee would return to the question.

8. **Mr. Shingiro** (Burundi) said that he had requested an adjournment in order to give his delegation time to consult its capital and other delegations, as well as to hold consultations with the delegation that had requested the recorded vote on the proposal of Burundi to request a legal opinion. His delegation would require 48 hours.

9. *A recorded vote was taken on the motion proposed by the representative of Burundi to adjourn, for 48 hours, the debate of the Committee on the proposal by Burundi to seek a legal opinion.*

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay.

Abstaining:

Bhutan, Fiji, Jamaica, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Thailand.

10. *The motion was adopted by 67 votes to 56, with 11 abstentions.*

11. **Mr. Oussein** (Comoros) and **Mr. Yusuf** (Somalia) said that their machines had not worked during the vote.

12. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) noted that delegations in arrears were not allowed to vote in the Committee.

Agenda item 29: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/73/38, A/73/263, A/73/266, A/73/285, A/73/294 and A/73/301)

13. **Ms. Bah-Chang** (Sierra Leone) said that the effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and other international agreements promoting the empowerment of women and compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women were prerequisites for sustainable development. Sierra Leone was currently working on its seventh periodic report on the implementation of the Convention, which it hoped to submit to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women before the end of 2018. Recognizing the need to invest in the development of women, Sierra Leone would continue to uphold the relevant protocols relating to the empowerment of women, including the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the Secretary-General's campaign "UNiTE to End Violence against Women".

14. The Government had enacted laws and developed policies to address violence against women and unequal power relations between men and women. It was currently considering a national strategy for the reduction of female genital mutilation and a national strategy would also soon be launched to address adolescent and child marriage. In addition, a secretariat on trafficking in persons had been established, and the Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2005 was being aligned with the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption and with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Free education of a high quality had been introduced in all government and government-assisted schools, which would benefit girls in particular.

15. Following the adoption by the Security Council of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) relating to women and peace and security, a national action plan had been developed to fully implement the provisions of those resolutions. The Government had guaranteed the protection of gender rights through the progressive adoption and implementation of laws relating to the prohibition and punishment of domestic and sexual violence. It had begun to hold consultations with stakeholders nationwide with a view to finalizing the policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women. When adopted, the policy would support the Government in adopting legislative measures for the establishment of a commission on gender affairs, intended to implement affirmative action to include a quota of a minimum of 30 per cent women in governance at all levels.

16. **Mr. Edrees** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group commended the Secretary-General's system-wide strategy on gender parity and his commitment to zero tolerance of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in the United Nations system. It reaffirmed its support for the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. As a stand-alone Sustainable Development Goal and a cross-cutting issue in all other Goals, gender equality and the empowerment of women required appropriate funding, implementation and follow-up at all levels.

17. Inequalities remained in labour force participation and leadership, income, pensions and working conditions. Women still lacked access to justice, basic health care, education, social protection and other services that supported their ability to generate income, particularly in rural areas. Violence and discrimination continued against women and girls, particularly in countries affected by armed conflict, under colonial rule or foreign occupation, or against which unilateral coercive measures had been applied. Climate change and natural disasters, which posed a challenge to the achievement of sustainable development, disproportionately affected women and girls. Women should participate in decision-making processes at all levels in order to contribute their knowledge and expertise to disaster risk reduction and to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

18. An important factor for the advancement of women was an environment that maintained world peace and promoted and protected human rights, democracy and the peaceful settlement of disputes. The political participation of women and their role in promoting peace and security should be strengthened. Men and boys should be engaged in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

19. In collaboration with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Development Programme and the Office of the Deputy Secretary-General, the Group had convened, at Headquarters, a high-level interactive dialogue on the subject "Innovative practices for the financial inclusion and economic empowerment of women, especially rural women: lessons from the South", on 13 March 2018, and an interactive discussion on the theme "Women's economic

empowerment and financial inclusion", on 27 and 28 June 2018.

20. Measures were needed to prevent, address and eliminate all forms of gender-based violence, especially femicide, and to ensure that women belonging to vulnerable groups were not subject to multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination. The Group was committed to promoting the right of women and girls to education at all levels, eliminating gender disparities in access to secondary and tertiary education and ensuring the access of women and girls to career development, training, scholarships and fellowships. Positive action should be taken to build the leadership skills of women and girls, guarantee their safety in the school environment and support women and girls with disabilities at all levels of education.

21. Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all development efforts was critical for achieving sustainable development, combating hunger and malnutrition, poverty and disease, and ensuring the full participation of women in political, economic, social and cultural life. Adequate resources must be allocated for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in the workplace. The Group looked forward to increasing international cooperation and global partnership for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, including the fulfilment of commitments on official development assistance, debt relief, market access, financial and technical support and capacity-building, and access to science and technology for women and girls.

22. **Mr. Aldahhak** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that only a few days previously, members of the terrorist group Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) had brutally killed 25-year-old Tharawat al-Fadil Abu Umar, one of the civilian women abducted by that group during its assault on Suwayda' Governorate in July 2018. That outrageous act was just the latest in a long list of brutal crimes against women in Syria that would not have been possible without the support provided to extremist groups by the corrupt Governments of certain well-known States that continued to use their ill-gotten petrodollar wealth to sow chaos and destruction throughout the region.

23. Over the previous seven years Syrian women had borne the brunt of the most heinous forms of terrorism, supported by States wishing to promote extremist ideologies that treated women only as objects or sex slaves. Syrian women had also suffered from the bitter loss of loved ones killed in the terrorist war being waged against their homeland, while other women endured abysmal conditions in refugee camps in neighbouring countries, where they were often forced into early marriages, trafficked by criminal gangs or forced into prostitution in order to survive. One neighbouring State, in particular, was exploiting the suffering of refugees, including refugee women and children, in order to blackmail the European Union into granting it membership as well as visa-free access for its citizens. Meanwhile, other women continued to suffer under Israeli occupation, as a result of the crimes of the illegitimate international coalition or from unilateral coercive measures imposed by certain States.

24. Despite the horrors they had experienced, Syrian women continued to play a key role in the recovery of Syria, including as ministers and ambassadors abroad. The Vice-President of Syria was also a woman. Syrian women were also active in the Syrian Red Crescent, the Syria Trust for Development and the more than 1,400 licensed non-governmental organizations operating nationwide.

25. Syria was working with its international partners, relevant United Nations agencies and other stakeholders, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and non-governmental organizations from abroad, to empower and enhance the status of women. Syrian women received free health-care services while their children received free compulsory education. Syria would continue to combat the extremist groups that had abused, tortured and murdered so many women and girls, and would not allow them to undo the progress achieved by Syrian women over so many decades.

26. **Ms. Bushaqer** (Bahrain) said that said that her Government was striving to ensure that both men and women played an equitable role in national efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2001, Bahrain had established the Supreme Council for Women, which had been entrusted with formulating and putting in place national plans and policies for improving the situation of women and ensuring that their rights were fully upheld. The Council had recently elaborated a national framework to promote gender equality and address women's needs in plans and policies. The framework provided for the establishment of a national observatory on gender balance indicators and the drafting of national reports assessing the effectiveness of the country's policies and initiatives on gender equality and women's empowerment.

27. In 2017, Bahrain had adopted a new family law, with a view to strengthening legal protections for Bahraini families and enhancing family cohesion. Bahrain had also established family courts, a specialized office of the public prosecutor to address family

disputes, offices to promote reconciliation among family members, an alimony fund, and family protection units in the country's police directorates.

28. Women comprised a high proportion of the country's workforce and 28 per cent of its business owners — a far higher proportion than in other countries in the Middle East region. In 2017, UN-Women and the Supreme Council for Women had launched the Princess Sabika Bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa Global Award to highlight efforts to provide equal opportunities for men and women worldwide. UN-Women had, moreover, established a programme office in Bahrain in 2017, which would support the country's empowerment efforts and further entrench the status of Bahrain as an internationally-renowned centre for women's empowerment.

29. **Ms. Bassene** (Senegal) said that her Government was implementing programmes, in line with the national strategy for gender equity and equality, to support the empowerment of women and girls, who constituted more than half the population of Senegal. For example, the gender units of 11 ministries had been allocated budgetary resources on account of their potential to drive major change, a commission on entrepreneurship had been created to promote the empowerment of women and a scholarship programme, established with the support of the Economic Community of West African States, rewarded excellence in the scientific, professional and technical fields for girls from disadvantaged families.

30. Senegal had adopted a law prohibiting and criminalizing female genital mutilation and had developed a national plan of action to accelerate the abandonment of cutting. With a view to mitigating the risks and consequences of obstetric fistula, which mainly affected women who were poor, illiterate or living in remote areas, the Government had made treatment for obstetric fistula and caesarean sections free of charge. Since 2007, her delegation had presented, on behalf of the African Group, the draft resolution on supporting efforts to end obstetric fistula, which had always been adopted by consensus. The draft resolution to be presented at the current session would highlight the progress made and the difficulties faced in combating that scourge.

31. With a view to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, Senegal had established regional committees and a national technical committee for tackling gender-based violence. To improve procedures for the collection, monitoring and analysis of relevant data within the framework of the 2030 Agenda, the Government had established an annual review of the inclusion of the gender dimension in public policies.

32. **Ms. Fofana** (Burkina Faso) said that, since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, her Government had firmly committed itself to the new development architecture through the adoption of a national plan for social and economic development covering the period 2016–2020, which advocated the synergy of the roles of men and women in the development process and in the family through the elimination of existing inequalities. The sectoral policies and strategies established by the Government contributed to protecting and promoting the rights of women, advancing their empowerment and increasing their participation in the development process and decision-making.

33. In the light of the persistent gender gap in access to wage employment, the increased difficulties faced by women in finding a job or becoming self-employed and the limited access of women to land, every State should take measures to eliminate gender inequality in order to enable women to achieve economic empowerment through equal access to work, land and the means to support self-employment. In that regard, important national mechanisms in place included: a fund to support income-generating activities for women; a programme aimed at enabling the effective contribution of women to national wealth and ensuring their development; a law against female genital mutilation; a programme for reducing unemployment and underemployment among young people and women; and a multisectoral action plan for the implementation of the road map of the African Union on the demographic dividend.

34. Given that the elimination of gender inequality was a requirement for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and sustainable economic growth, the international community should adopt long-term measures to intensify efforts to improve the situation of women.

35. **Ms. Sorto Rosales** (El Salvador) said that significant legislative progress had recently been made in her country with the adoption of a law on equality, equity and the eradication of discrimination against women and a special comprehensive law on a life free from violence for women. In addition, a national policy on women's access to a life free from violence had been drafted, which represented a long-term strategic and political framework and included measures such as the detection, prevention and punishment of violence against women in all its manifestations.

36. Gender equality and the empowerment of women were fundamental to the achievement of development,

governance and peace and security. In July 2017, the Government had launched its first national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which reflected an increased commitment to women's rights, in particular in the areas of peacebuilding and security. El Salvador was also one of five countries in the region that was piloting the Spotlight Initiative, which aimed to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. In parallel, a strategy to prevent femicide and sexual violence had been launched, a national alert system on the status of violence against women had been established and communication campaigns had been launched to improve the response to and reporting of such violence.

37. In the light of its firm commitment to meet the needs of groups of women that suffered from multiple forms of discrimination and violence, including older women, indigenous women, women with disabilities and migrant women, the Government had adopted a national equality plan that focused on areas such as economic autonomy, care and social protection, and on mainstreaming the principle of equality and non-discrimination. Adolescents' right to comprehensive, timely and good-quality health care, with an emphasis on sexual and reproductive health were also being promoted. Although significant progress had been made in overcoming discrimination, States would need to continue to coordinate with all relevant organizations to fulfil the commitments made.

38. **Ms. Chidiac** (Lebanon) said that her country had a long history of contributions to the promotion of the rights of women and girls, and her delegation was proud of the fact that a female Lebanese expert, Ms. Nahla Haydar, had been serving on the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women since 2013. Over the previous year, movements had taken shape to raise awareness of, and denounce, violence and sexual harassment committed against women, opening a sincere and dynamic debate in societies around the world. In that context, her Government had recognized its responsibility to protect and promote women and girls. The Council of Ministers had approved a draft law on sexual harassment in the workplace, which would soon be the subject of a vote in the Parliament. Lebanon had also repealed a law allowing an alleged rapist to escape criminal prosecution by marrying his victim.

39. Her delegation noted the efforts of Lebanese civil society, by way of local and international non-governmental organizations, to raise awareness of early and forced marriage. Civil society and human rights defenders must be allowed to carry out their work without hindrance or fear of reprisals and in full respect of freedom, democracy and the rule of law, and should be acknowledged as credible partners in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other internationally agreed development goals. Her Government was committed to the promotion of gender equality, the empowerment of women, education for all, sexual and reproductive health, and the fight against discrimination and all forms of violence. To that end, it was necessary to reduce legal gaps concerning the protection of women and to expand efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in public and private life.

40. Regrettably, discrimination and violence against women and girls continued in many regions of the world. They were often the first victims of historical and structural inequalities that severely affected their fundamental rights and freedoms. Her Government was aware of the challenges posed by the presence of a great number of displaced Syrian refugees on its territory, some of whom were the victims of sexual violence, harassment and early and forced marriage. Equality for women was the mark of true civilization, and it was high time for women and girls to be afforded the full enjoyment of their rights.

41. **Ms. León Murillo** (Costa Rica) said that much remained to be done if Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality was to be achieved, as illustrated by the fact that only 18 of the 196 delegations that had spoken during the general debate of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly had been represented by women.

42. Gender equality should be a goal for countries committed to inclusive, democratic and sustainable coexistence. For its part, the Government of Costa Rica had achieved gender parity in its Cabinet for the first time in its history in 2018, its national gender equality and equity policy had been implemented 10 years prior and its new national policy in that area was a multidimensional instrument comprising four key elements: cultural change, and the distribution of time, wealth and power. Women's economic empowerment was also a top priority, given its indisputable impact on other forms of autonomy. Accordingly, road maps and strategies had been designed to safeguard women's physical and sexual autonomy, since autonomous and independent women were better able to break cycles of poverty, discrimination and violence. A national policy had also been put in place to respond to, prevent and provide protection from gender-based violence and the Executive branch had stated in August 2018 that preventing and addressing violence against women was a national priority.

43. She commended the work of the Secretary-General and United Nations agencies to eradicate sexual exploitation and harassment within the Organization and said that the perpetrators must be severely punished. The Organization should lead by example as a place free from harassment and discrimination where decisive progress was made towards achieving the goals set by the international community on the situation of women.

44. **Mr. Oussein** (Comoros) said that the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 of the African Union both underscored that sustainable development would be impossible as long as half of humanity was denied its human rights. In order to reduce inequality and eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, they must not only have equal access to quality education, economic resources, jobs and leadership positions but also equal opportunities to participate in political life.

45. His Government was committed to the effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and, 23 years after their adoption, conditions for women and girls in the Comoros had improved substantially in such areas as education and health. The strategy for economic growth and poverty reduction prioritized equitable growth and the empowerment of women. As a result, the number of women serving in high positions in national institutions, including at the ministry level, had increased nearly threefold over the previous decade.

46. In combating inequalities, extreme poverty, unemployment and violence, the Government was facilitating access to microcredit and had set aside funds at a national banking institution for use by women and children. Women occupied an important place in Comorian society, and his Government would spare no effort in countering social disparities, violence against women and girls, illiteracy, famine and poverty.

47. **Mr. Yaremenko** (Ukraine) said that, in recognition of its commitment to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, the Government had approved a State social programme for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women for the period up to 2021 and had established the position of Government Commissioner on Gender Equality Policy to strengthen the coordination and monitoring of government commitments to gender equality.

48. During its recent term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Ukraine had successfully carried out its national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in order to increase women's participation in decision-making in the areas of national security, defense and peacemaking, ensure the protection of women and girls and prevent and respond to gender-based violence. Gender-responsive budgeting had also been included in the national strategy for the development of public funds management.

49. The elevation of the status of the UN-Women Office in Ukraine to the level of Country Office earlier in the year was an important step towards a broader and deeper partnership with that entity, and would strengthen national mechanisms to protect equal rights and opportunities for women and men.

50. Foreign aggression against Ukraine had brought fear and insecurity to the majority of women and girls in occupied territories of Ukraine, including Crimea and Donbas, and the Government was enhancing its efforts for their protection and empowerment in all spheres of life. A national action plan had been adopted in connection with the recommendations set out in the concluding observations of the eighth periodic report of Ukraine on its implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had recently become the first State institution to join the awareness-raising solidarity movement HeForShe in Ukraine, and it was clear that sustainable development would be impossible without the full enjoyment of equal rights by women and girls, men and boys.

51. **Ms. Pobee** (Ghana) said that the advancement of women was not only a matter of respect for the human rights of all persons but also a vital tool for achieving sustainable development, peace and security. Structural and institutional gender inequality was a root cause of violence against women. Despite the comprehensive framework provided by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda, the achievement of their goals and targets concerning women and girls remained elusive; the underrepresentation of women in public decision-making roles was an indication of an unfinished agenda. Accordingly, her delegation commended the exceptional work of the African Women Leaders Network and its partners. Her Government had also facilitated consultations regarding a revised gender equality bill and had strengthened efforts to assist women financially by way of the Microfinance and Small Loans Centre.

52. Concerted action was needed at the national and international levels to address sexual harassment, which was one part of a continuum of gender-based violence. Its negative effects on women's economic and political roles in society could no longer be ignored. The enactment of laws to provide protection to them was an

important first step. While Ghana had adopted relevant national laws, much more work was required.

53. In addressing gender-based violence, the Government had also introduced a national campaign on ending child, early and forced marriages, a 10-year framework and renewable operational plan to end child marriages, and legislation such as an amendment to the Intestate Succession Law and the introduction of a bill concerning the property rights of spouses.

54. The Secretariat and Member States must continue to devote resources to addressing issues of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

55. **Ms. Matar** (United Arab Emirates) said that the year 2020 would mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Programme for Action, a significant milestone that should encourage the international community to redouble its efforts to achieve gender equality and promote the empowerment of women. The Constitution of the United Arab Emirates provided that male and female citizens were equal in terms of their rights and duties, and her Government believed that the empowerment of women and gender equality were essential prerequisites for building just and tolerant societies. To achieve that objective, her Government had strengthened its legislation on wage equality for men and women and had adopted laws to strengthen respect for women's rights. It was also striving to increase the number of women in leadership and decision-making positions. Women currently held approximately one third of the positions in the Council of Ministers.

56. Much of the progress made by women in the United Arab Emirates had been achieved because of the support and vision of Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, Supreme Chairperson of the Family Development Foundation, President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood and President of the General Women's Union. Those three bodies had formulated national strategies and policies for empowering women so that they could play a key role in the development of the country, in line with the national development plan, UAE Vision 2021, and international benchmarks. The Gender Balance Council was also endeavouring to promote equality between women and men, which could have a significant positive impact on the economy and on efforts to promote peace and security.

57. The United Arab Emirates fully supported the women, peace and security agenda and had made women's empowerment a foreign policy priority. It was also a strong supporter of the Every Woman, Every Child initiative to reduce maternal and infant mortality. Her country hosted the UN-Women Gulf Liaison Office and would continue to provide support to UN-Women, which had recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Defence and the General Women's Union for the provision of specialized training to female military officers that would prepare them for United Nations peacekeeping missions in the Middle East region.

58. **Ms. Rosa Suazo** (Honduras) said that States should capitalize on the growing international attention being devoted to the need to eradicate violence against women and intensify their efforts to improve the lives of women and girls by implementing holistic and multidimensional programmes that not only combated violence against women but also provided access to education, credit, health care and food security. Notably, Honduras was one of the countries in the region in the Spotlight Initiative.

59. Greater awareness of the links between gender-based violence and non-State actors such as gangs would strengthen the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the investigations carried out by national and international human rights bodies. Violence against women took different forms around the world and those specificities must be recognized in order to develop appropriate and complete solutions.

60. Honduras was implementing various programmes to support women's development, education, health and active participation in society, most notably the "Ciudad Mujer" programme, which was an inter-agency effort involving 16 government entities. Given that 44 per cent of women and girls in Honduras lived in rural areas and women's economic autonomy was fundamental to combating all forms of gender-based violence, a financial programme designed to meet the needs of rural women, "CrediMujer", had been set up in 2015.

61. **Ms. Hillebrandt** (Bahamas) said that her Government had paid special attention to the issues of trafficking in persons, violence against women, and the economic empowerment of women. The Department of Gender and Family Affairs, the national mechanism mandated to promote the advancement and empowerment of women, had undertaken or proposed several initiatives, including a five-year strategic plan to improve the quality of life in the Bahamas; a national strategic plan for ending gender-based violence; regular meetings with non-governmental organizations and interested persons to share information about issues affecting women and men; review of a national gender equality policy for submission to the Cabinet; and participation in the Inter-Ministry Committee on Trafficking in Persons.

62. The Bahamas had built partnerships with national, regional and international agencies which assisted in reviewing concerns about the advancement of women nationwide. There had been consistent collaboration with UN-Women, the Pan American Development Foundation and the Pan American Health Organization.

63. Her Government also extended a standing invitation to all thematic special procedure mandate holders of the United Nations, and fully supported the purpose and process of national reporting. Although the Bahamas was a small island developing State and had limited capacities, it would present its sixth periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women later in the current month. The Bahamas was committed to the protection of all human rights and to the advancement and empowerment of women and girls.

64. **Ms. Vieira** (Cabo Verde) said that her Government was committed to formulating policies to address barriers to the advancement of women and girls. Women's rights were human rights and the inclusion and promotion of women contributed to the development of resilient and sustainable societies. Gender parity and equal opportunities were enshrined in the Constitution and had guided the Government in the national implementation of international conventions on women's rights.

65. Several national plans and policies had been adopted in the areas of gender parity in education, universal access to education, gender equality, combating gender-based violence and assisting victims, and trafficking in persons. New policies to strengthen capacities and legal frameworks to improve family planning, reproductive health-care services and reproductive rights had also been set out in accordance with the commitments of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Furthermore, political participation and leadership were being improved to ensure broader representation of women in decision-making positions.

66. Major challenges lay ahead, particularly with regard to the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against women and girls. Comprehensive policies and resources were therefore needed, and financial inclusion must be improved for vulnerable women who did not have economic resources and assets. The feminization of poverty must also be tackled. In overcoming such challenges, a new window of opportunity for the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women would be opened.

67. **Ms. Ben Ategh** (Libya) said that there was no doubt that women could play a pivotal role in sustainable development initiatives. However, the difficult political and security situation was preventing many Libyan women from realizing their rights and participating fully in the national recovery. Nevertheless, Libya would continue to strive to achieve the political, economic and social empowerment of women and their engagement in all development plans and projects. To that end, the Presidential Council had established women's empowerment offices in a number of ministries and State institutions with a view to facilitating women's political participation, and women had also participated in drafting the new Constitution, which provided for gender equality, non-discrimination and the equitable participation of women in leadership positions.

68. The Government had issued a decree on the provision of assistance to women and girls who had been subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence during the political unrest that had occurred in 2011. The Ministry of Justice had also issued a decree providing for the establishment of a special fund for victims of sexual violence and legal and social assistance to those victims.

69. Her Government strongly condemned all forms of trafficking in persons, especially trafficking in women and girls. National laws on human trafficking had therefore been aligned with the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the United Nations Convention against Corruption and close cooperation had been undertaken with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Children's Fund, UN-Women and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in order to enhance criminal justice and law enforcement mechanisms and promote security, especially in the south of the country.

70. **Mr. Locsin, Jr.** (Philippines), recounting several historical examples of pillage and rape during wartime and the ways such crimes had been prevented or punished, said that although war often provided a psychological backdrop for misogyny, men were not slaves to their basic desires and could respond to discipline. Trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation existed in all societies regardless of whether economic times were good or bad. While the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals could help to combat sex trafficking, simply eradicating poverty would not solve the problem of trafficking. Similarly, education had a role to play, but it was useless in dire situations, such as the choice to go with abductors or stay behind and die, or to remain in captivity or be tortured.

71. Only women qualified in police and law enforcement work held the power to solve the problem of trafficking in women and girls. During his time as Mayor of the city of Davao, President Duterte had turned the case work on sex-related crimes and their victims over to women police officers. Cases had then moved faster and the chances of re-victimization had decreased. Women provided a unique perspective: they offered the comfort that victims needed as well as the rage that drove the wheels of justice to turn.

72. It was important to track down and prosecute the traffickers and their clients by any means necessary, bearing in mind human rights law and international law. The perpetrators should be confined to small cages, similar to the way they had treated their victims, and be restricted from causing any further harm to society.

73. His delegation was facilitating the work on a draft resolution on combating trafficking in women and girls and looked forward to constructive engagement on that matter.

74. **Mr. Mohd Nasir** (Malaysia) said that his country had made notable progress on gender equality and women's empowerment, including through the 1989 National Policy on Women and the Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women 2010–2015. Several measures had been taken to encourage women to return to the workforce, such as career programmes, grants for childcare centres at the workplace, increased maternity leave and flexible work arrangements. The Government had also ratified several international agreements, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Cairo Programme of Action and the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action, demonstrating a commitment to ensuring the protection of the rights of women and girls.

75. Quantifiable success had been achieved in terms of women's participation in the national labour force and their holding of senior management positions in the public service and on the board of directors of listed companies, among other areas. The first female Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia had been elected in May 2018, and a Malaysian woman had been appointed as Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme.

76. Malaysia would continue to champion the cause of women's advancement, both within the scope of its national development priorities and in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

77. **Mr. Ligoya** (Malawi) said that gender equality and women's empowerment were priority areas of the national development agenda, and that, with the support of the President of Malawi, who was also a HeForShe IMPACT Champion, the Government had been implementing initiatives to promote the socioeconomic development of women and girls. Those included a programme to readmit young women to school, an amendment to the Constitution to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 years, the construction of girls' hostels and sanitary facilities, and a national strategy to end child marriage. With gender mainstreaming policies in place, the intake of female students in tertiary education institutions had increased from 5 percent in 2000 to 48 per cent in 2016. The Government understood that investing in girls' education would afford them better economic opportunities and help in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. With regard to agriculture and food production, the Government had amended the Land Act of 2016 to give women the right to own land with a secured tenure and was promoting initiatives to provide poor women with savings and loan services.

78. While the number of women holding decision-making positions in the civil service had risen significantly, women were still underrepresented in Malawi. Therefore, in addition to implementing laws and policies on gender, the Government was taking measures to further increase the number of women serving in parliament and local governments.

79. **Ms. Prizreni** (Albania) said that a quota system and outreach efforts had increased women's representation in parliament to 28 per cent, following the national elections held in June 2017. In addition, her Government was currently composed of 50 per cent women, many of whom held very important portfolios such as defence and justice. With regard to gender mainstreaming, 25 budget programmes relating to 10 line ministries for 2019–2021 contained gender-responsive financial markers and related key performance indicators.

80. At the local level, the National Network of Women Councillors had been established to bring all alliances of women councillors under a common women's agenda. The female participation rate at the municipal council level was between 35 and 40 per cent, and the aim was to increase it to 50 per cent in the local elections of 2019. Women represented 15 per cent of mayors countrywide. The three largest municipalities in Albania had in place a local gender action plan for the implementation of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life.

81. Her Government had taken steps to strengthen its legislative and institutional framework on gender equality and non-discrimination and to improve the

monitoring and accountability of public offices in relation to women and gender-based violence. For a more efficient legal framework to combat gender-based violence, no amnesty would be granted for the perpetrators of gender-based violence. Furthermore, with the assistance of UN-Women, a teacher training programme was being implemented nationwide to address gender-based violence in the light of the new national responsibilities assigned to educational institutions following recent changes to the law on measures against violence in family relationships.

82. Albania had just adopted its first national action plan for the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), inspired by the words recently expressed by the Chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee: "A more peaceful world can only be achieved if women and their fundamental rights and security are recognized and protected in war".

83. **Ms. Vives Balmaña** (Andorra) said that education was a human right, yet women accounted for 61 per cent of all illiterate persons worldwide. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals would depend in large measure on the way that girls and women were educated. It was vital to eliminate stereotypes through education, address violence against women and eradicate discrimination against them in legislative frameworks. Education in Andorra was diverse and free of gender stereotypes.

84. As part of the national efforts undertaken to promote gender equality, a dedicated team had been established to support women subjected to gender-based violence and take follow-up action. In addition, through a two-year inclusive and participatory process, situations of discrimination had been identified, over half of which affected women in Andorra. On the basis of the results of that process, a draft law had been presented on equality of treatment and non-discrimination, which aimed to strengthen the principle of gender mainstreaming and compensatory equality between men and women. Concrete measures for implementation of the draft law had also been developed, such as the creation of an equality observatory.

85. Andorra wished to contribute to cooperation programmes that focused on integrating women through education and training. Progress towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda had been slow to date, but education, the realization of human rights, the inclusion of a gender perspective, and the prevention of discrimination and abuse against women would all play an important role.

86. **Mr. Komara** (Guinea) said that experience had shown that societies that gave women an important role made significant progress towards economic, social and political development. It was therefore regrettable that women continued to be the main victims of poverty, climate change, recurrent forms of violence and discrimination. Women had featured prominently in Guinean history, and Guinea had been one of the first countries to ratify international legal instruments on the promotion and empowerment of women. In dedicating his second mandate to the women and girls of Guinea, the President had confirmed that sustainable development could not be achieved without women's participation. Although there were few women in the Government, they occupied key financial and administrative positions.

87. Education, access to financial resources and physical well-being were essential to promoting and empowering women. The Government had built and equipped empowerment centres in the chief towns of the country, constructed over 4,000 classrooms in rural areas and awarded merit scholarships to young girls. Mutual funds for women had been set up in the five communes of Conakry and in 27 prefectures of Guinea, and microfinance institutions were fostering women's entrepreneurship.

88. In the area of health care, the authorities had implemented an updated national strategy with provisions on reducing maternal, neonatal and infant/child mortality, treating women with obstetric fistula, and caring for the victims of gender-based violence. However, numerous challenges remained, including countering the influence of traditions and beliefs, providing greater access to technology and establishing a climate of peace.

89. **Ms. Mohammed** (Ethiopia) said that her Government had made women's empowerment a priority. Indeed, the development of women and children was one of the pillars of its Growth and Transformation Plan II, which had been designed to ensure women's ownership of land and their access to credit and other fixed assets. Gender had been mainstreamed in other areas of the Plan and her Government was working to ensure gender equality in education and employment, enhance access to reproductive health and rights, eliminate violence against women and children and increase women's participation at the highest level of political decision-making.

90. A strategic plan for an integrated and multi-sectoral response to violence against women and child justice had been implemented, which focused on prevention, protection and response mechanisms. In addition, the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs

had included indicators on violence reduction in its plan for 2016–2020.

91. Her Government had made renewed commitments at the Girl Summit of 2014 to end female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage by 2025. As a result of a legal and policy framework and the mobilization of a high level of political support, the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting had decreased from 56 per cent to 23 per cent and the rate of child marriage from 21 per cent to 8 per cent in 2016. Action had also been taken to eradicate obstetric fistula by raising awareness of the need to prevent early marriage and expanding medical treatment centres to the nine regional states.

92. Trafficking in persons was prohibited by the Constitution and by the revised Criminal Code. Ethiopia had also adopted a proclamation for the prevention and suppression of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants and the federal police had established a human trafficking and narcotics section to investigate those crimes.

93. While the achievements made in fulfilling the advancement of women were to be celebrated, there remained vast gaps and tremendous challenges, including deep-rooted social norms and attitudes and a lack of disaggregated data, resources and capacity.

94. **Ms. Phromlert** (Thailand) said that, as the advancement of women and gender equality lay at the heart of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, commitments for the empowerment of women at the national, regional and international levels must be implemented more comprehensively and systematically.

95. Efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women in Thailand had been made by the Government, by other stakeholders such as the private sector, civil society and youth, and by an increasing number of men, including through the HeForShe campaign. The fourth draft of the national human rights plan for the period 2019–2023 would address a wide range of issues and would also be extended to cover the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons.

96. The Government had intensified its efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, and in particular to respond to those who faced multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and those in complex situations, such as women prisoners. In that context, her delegation was proud to note that the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders, also known as the Bangkok Rules, had been implemented worldwide.

97. Economic empowerment was an indispensable component of sustainable development and gender must not impede access to business opportunities. Women entrepreneurs represented 47 per cent of the business population of Thailand and the Government would continue to facilitate access to finance and start-up technology for prospective women entrepreneurs nationwide.

98. National measures and guidelines had been adopted on women and peace and security, which encompassed the role of women as agents of change in addressing political and social conflicts domestically and internationally. Thai female military and police personnel were now serving in three United Nations peacekeeping operations overseas and female personnel accounted for 24 per cent of all Thai peacekeeping officers globally.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

99. **Mr. Furumoto** (Japan), responding to the statement made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at the Committee's ninth meeting, said that the allegations made were factually incorrect and groundless. For over 70 years, Japan had consistently respected democracy and human rights and had contributed to the peace and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region and the international community as a whole. Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should bring true peace to North-East Asia by overcoming mutual mistrust and deepening their cooperation with one other. Japan wished to share that approach and called on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to aim for a bright future together. Should that country continue to raise the same issues, his delegation would not use the right of reply to repeat its position, but that did not mean it agreed with the position of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

100. **Mr. Lee** Jooil (Republic of Korea), responding to the statement made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at the Committee's ninth meeting, said that the 12 North Korean workers referred to had defected to the Republic of Korea of their own free will and enjoyed full freedom as fellow Koreans. The relevant authority of the Republic of Korea was reviewing the recent allegations. His Government hoped that free movement between the two Koreas would be possible sooner rather than later, thus overcoming the constraints of a divided Korean Peninsula and relieving the pain endured by separated families. His Government would not spare any efforts to

resolve the humanitarian issues through a faithful implementation of the Panmunjom Declaration on Peace, Prosperity and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula and the Pyongyang Joint Declaration of September 2018.

101. **Mr. Ri** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the heinous crimes committed by Japan during the Second World War had not been officially recognized or duly compensated. Without recognition or compensation, there cou'd be no bright future for Japan and no improvement in relations between the two countries. Japan had tried to evade its past crimes and had also tried to avoid officially recognizing, apologizing or providing compensation for them. No statute of limitations applied to such crimes against humanity.

102. Regarding the 12 women abducted from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including Ms. Kim Ryon Hui, the facts were all coming to light as the days went by. The women's families were anxiously waiting for their return and all the women wanted to return home to their parents. The Panmunjom Declaration and the Pyongyang Joint Declaration called for an end to the decades-long division and confrontation between North and South Korea and for the countries to proceed towards national reconciliation and unity, peace and prosperity and reunification.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.